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# President Accepts Blame in Attack On Marine Base

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LOS ANGELES, Dec. 27—President Reagan today accepted the blame and responsibility for the security procedures in effect at the U.S. Marine compound in Beirut on Oct. 23, when 241 servicemen were killed in a suicide truck bombing.

Reagan ordered that none of the local commanders be court-martialed or otherwise disciplined for security procedures that a White House official acknowledged were "lax." The president previously had expressed his confidence in Marine Corps Commandant P.X. Kelley.

In an early morning White House statement issued moments before he boarded Air Force One to begin a week-long vacation in southern California, Reagan said the Marine commanders had "suffered quite enough" and should not be punished for not fully comprehending the nature of the terrorist threat.

"If there is to be blame, it properly rests here in this office and with this president," Reagan said. "And I accept responsibility for the bad as well as the good."

But on the presidential plane en route to Los Angeles a White House official put most of the blame on "state-supported terrorism" backed by Syria and Iran and also claimed that the Carter administration had damaged the U.S. intelligence-gathering capability.

The official said that the Reagan administration will respond to a report of the Long commission, a censored version of which may be issued Wednesday at the Pentagon, by reviewing U.S. intelligence procedures and by seeking to "mobilize world opinion" against state-supported terrorism.

"For instance, the Carter administration did a considerable cutback on intelligence-gathering, took people out, people we had in various places, quit using certain people," the official said. "So we could review that, that could be one step we could take."

Reagan made no reference to past administrations or to any direct terrorist involvement of Syria or Iran during his eight-minute appearance in the White House briefing room in which he said he agreed with the Long commission that "The United States and its military institutions are by tradition and training inadequately equipped to deal with the fundamentally new phenomenon of state-supported terrorism."

In response to a question, Reagan acknowledged that he was concerned that the criticisms of inadequate security made by the commission and in a separate report last week by a House subcommittee would make some people think the Marines killed in the bombing had died in vain.

"And I think it would be tragic for the families who have lost a loved one if this comes about, because it hasn't been in vain," Reagan said. "The cause was worthwhile, or four major nations would not have engaged in trying to find a solution."

Reagan went on to say in answer to another question that "while there's hope for peace, we have to remain" in Lebanon. On Air Force One the official who briefed reporters said that what Reagan meant is that "absent a complete breakdown of the talks we will stay there."

The official was referring to the talks of national reconciliation through which the government of Lebanese President Amin Gemayel is trying to bring in opposing factions. Reagan is optimistic that these talks will bear fruit, but no date has been set for their resumption.

"If the talks did break down, if these fellows show no way of getting together, then we [would] think our mission no longer existed," the official said.

Reagan's appearance today was designed by the White House to capture the political high ground in the debate over the security measures, which both the Long commission and the House Armed Services subcommittee found to be inadequate.

"We wanted to get the president out in front on this one," an official said.

To accomplish this, the president examined the Long commission report Friday and discussed it over the holiday weekend with his national security affairs adviser, Robert C. McFarlane. The White House subsequently issued an edict to the Defense Department holding up the Long commission report, which had been scheduled for release today.

McFarlane and White House chief of staff James A. Baker III, both former Marines, reportedly had recommended to the president that he take full responsibility for the security measures in effect on Oct. 23.

On Air Force One, after saying that the Long commission had made an "almost minute-by-minute" review of these procedures, the White House official said Reagan had accepted the analysis.

"Security was lax," the official said. "You have to realize there are two terms, responsibility and culpability. Responsibility, yes, the local commanders were responsible for the welfare of their troops. For instance, things like such a large portion of the force was confined to a single area in that building. So, yes, responsibility; culpability no."

The official said that Reagan's decision overrides a recommendation of the report calling for Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger to review what had happened and take appropriate disciplinary action.

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"The president, after reviewing the report, decided that responsibility rests on his shoulders and that he accepts the full responsibility for the incident," said White House spokesman Larry Speakes. "The president believes that you can transfer some or all of your authority through the military chain of command but you can never transfer your responsibility."

Reagan is to spend two days in Los Angeles before departing for his annual New Year's weekend in Palm Springs.